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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 HARARE 000165

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COPSON

E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/31/2009
TAGS: [EAGR](#) [PGOV](#) [ZI](#) [ECON](#) [EINV](#)
SUBJECT: WHITE FARMER GROUPS STILL AT ODDS

Classified By: Ambassador Christopher Dell for reason 1.4 b/d

Summary

1. (C) A recent appeal by a branch of the Commercial Farmers Union (CFU) requesting financial assistance for a reception for Vice President Joyce Mujuru has divided white farmers. The CFU, which has defended the appeal, told us privately it was part of an effort to rebuild ties with the GOZ. However, the more hard line Justice for Agriculture (JAG) group has reacted angrily to the appeal with numerous letters on its web site denouncing the reception as a sell-out. End summary.

CFU Appeal

2. (C) As a goodwill gesture toward the ZANU-PF government, the CFU,s Midlands chapter recently asked members to contribute Z\$ 1 million (US\$ 161) for a Jan. 12 reception in honor of recently-appointed VP Mujuru. The CFU,s letter to members - reprinted on the JAG news service - urged them to treat this collection as "a strategy that will ultimately lead to benefits of sorts in the future." Both CFU and JAG officials told us that this marks the first time since the GOZ began fast-track land reform in 2001 that a CFU chapter has asked members to sponsor a ZANU-PF function.

3. (C) CFU President Doug Taylor Freeme said in December that this approach would be in line with his efforts to rebuild relations with GOZ leaders whom he considers reasonable, such as Vice President Joseph Msika, Lands Minister John Nkomo and Reserve Bank President Gideon Gono. Taylor-Freeme - whose remaining membership is still farming on a reduced scale - also told us on Jan. 5 that he has largely given up both on the compensation route and on the MDC,s prospects to take power. The CFU President even confided that he now prefers a "moderate" ZANU-PF to MDC government. As part of an agreement between Lands Minister Nkomo and Taylor-Freeme, the CFU President said several of his white members in Chinoyi (Mashonaland West) have even applied for classification as A2 farmers (large-scale land reform beneficiaries) since December.

JAG Reaction

4. (SBU) However, white farmers in the more hard line Justice for Agriculture (JAG) have reacted angrily, condemning such overtures as "appeasement of the enemy." A delegation of JAG members told us Jan 12 that most of their members would never again sit at a negotiating table with the ZANU-PF nor return to large-scale commercial farming in Zimbabwe. They said their current strategy was solely to obtain compensation for losses from either the international community or from an MDC government. Excerpts from JAG,s electronic discussion group reflect their rancor toward the GOZ and, increasingly, the CFU:

- "We only needed one or two in our midst that chickened out . . . By doing their deals (CFU members) bought time for themselves, but at what expense? . . . (We must) not sup with the devils." - Former farmer TM Lambert

- "I am absolutely horrified at the compromise of integrity by these few farmers remaining on their land. . . I am disgusted to hear and read of farmers who are basically working for the thugs who stole the land." - Former farmer Liz Stewart

- "The CFU have continued to attempt to appease the Zimbabwean government for the last 59 months. . . The CFU said dialogue was the only way forward. . . As a former farmer and CFU member, I hang my head in disgust and shame." - Former farmer Cathy Buckley

Comment

15. (C) Animosity between CFU and JAG has increased to such an extent that white farmers no longer present a united front. Given that nearly all CFU members supported the MDC in the 2002 presidential elections, a turn toward a ZANU-PF faction from the 500 or so still-active white farmers signals a noteworthy evolution. If the Nkomo faction within the ruling party can stave off further farm seizures, it may have a shot at beginning a process of reconciliation with remaining white farmers - a necessary step, in our view, toward recovery in the farming sector.
DELL